

# State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

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## **Alaska Marine Highway Incorporates National Maritime Security Plan** U.S. Department of Homeland Security Upgrades 3200 Facilities, 9500 Vessels

(Juneau)—The Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) is responding to new federal regulations requiring increased port, harbor and vessel security. U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge announced Monday that some 3200 port facilities, 9500 vessels and 40 off-shore oil and natural gas rigs must comply with new requirements under the Maritime Transportation Security Act and the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code by the July 1, 2004 deadline.

AMHS General Manager John Falvey says security increases will be noticeable, but not inconvenient. "Ticket holders will notice new procedures and equipment, but should be able to go about their usual business as they travel," said Falvey. Passenger, vehicle and cargo screening is another requirement under the national security plan. "Screening is part of the program and we're training our security officers to be thorough and efficient, yet considerate and respectful of people's privacy," he added.

Many security measures will be physical improvements such as better lighting in terminals and parking lots, closed circuit cameras on car decks and checking in firearms. "Our intention is not to hassle anyone, but rather to increase the safety of our passengers, crew and assets," said Nona Wilson, Alaska DOT's Public Information Officer. "The alternative is a federal shutdown of our entire system, which would be disastrous for many communities and AMHS. In a broader sense, I think many people using our system will feel more comfortable knowing that the Marine Highway has enhanced its security structure to protect their safety."

The Marine Highway's fleet of nine vessels currently serves 34 ports of call in Southeast and Southwest Alaska, including the Bellingham, Washington and Prince Rupert. A tenth ship, the Fast Vehicle Ferry *Chenega*, is expected to begin service in Prince William Sound next spring.

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For additional information, please contact Nona Wilson with DOT/AMHS at (907) 465-3904.

To view the Department of Homeland Security's press release, visit this web address:  
[http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/interapp/press\\_release/press\\_release\\_0440.xml](http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/interapp/press_release/press_release_0440.xml)

